

THE
CHURCHMAN

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ART I.—FEAST OF TABERNACLES AND INGATHER-
ING. WHAT IT MEANT.

NOW, in the fall of the year, the Old Covenant was wont to celebrate its final Feast. In answer to this the Church has made no sign. The undistinguished Sundays after Trinity pass uninterruptedly along.

Only in Harvest Festivals we obey its call to natural thankfulness, and interweave some of its generous exhortations and picturesque accessories with these now familiar celebrations. So, without assistance from the Prayer Book, we act on the suggestions of the Law of Moses, and recur to the customs of Israel. It is a happy recurrence; for we need the lessons of the Old Testament, which make our relations with God in nature the foundations of our relations with God in history, and of our relations with God in grace.

So far, the Feast of Tabernacles, as the Feast of Ingathering, reappears among us in fainter outlines, and mingles its memories with the autumns of our years.

But the three great Festivals of the Jewish Calendar were not only agricultural thanksgivings: they were also historic records and prophetic types; and in these characters the Feast of Tabernacles alone has now no counterpart. We have our Christian Passover and Pentecost. Easter and Whitsuntide celebrate the historic facts, and announce the spiritual fulfilments of the New Covenant. But for the last Feast the Christian Calendar shows no substitute, and to its typical prophecy the Church makes no response.

What does this silence mean? Why, it may be asked, should it mean anything? But no one will ask that question who believes in the typical character of the Old Testament economy, who observes the cohesion and symmetry of its typology, and sees one of its most prominent and significant features in its scheme of annual feasts. Then, the ascertained bearing of the first and second of these solemnities will be a

sufficient argument, that the reference of the third must be no less precise; and its co-ordinate or, perhaps, superior dignity will assert a corresponding grandeur for the fulfilment which it forecasts.

And what, it has been said, can this be but the birth of Christ? Christmas alone ranges in dignity with Easter and Whitsuntide, as the Feast of Tabernacles with Passover and Pentecost; and so the Feast of the Nativity is the counterpart we seek.

Mede, as chief author of this opinion, argues it thus:

Of what thing concerning Christ to come it was a type, it is not in this case so express as in the former. But by that which St. John says (i. 14), "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled in us" (for so signifies *ἐσκήνωσεν*), by this, I say, St. John should seem to intimate that, as the Passover was a type of His Passion, Pentecost a figure of the sending of the Holy Ghost; so should the Feast of Tabernacles be for a type of His Incarnation, when the Divine Nature tabernacled in our flesh, and the Word of God became "Emmanuel, God with us." For it is incredible that this principal Feast should not be for a type of some principal thing concerning Christ, as well as the rest; it being as solemn as any of the former two, nay, rather the chiefest of the three, as having a more extraordinary course of sacrifices than either of the other; yea, one day's more continuance, this having eight festival days, the other two but seven. And there is nothing but His Incarnation and Nativity which can be applied thereto; and it may be, therefore, the eighth day was added as figuring the time of His Circumcision. (Discourse 48.)

He adds, as confirmation, "the use of a kind of Litany, in which the people continually cried Hosannah"—as pointing to the mystery "which made Him to be our Saviour, and us to cry 'Hosannah.'" Then, turning to the objection, that the times of the celebrations do not coincide, "Give me leave," he says, "to relate, not mine own, but the opinion of the most learned chronologers; the sum and conclusion whereof is that the birth of Christ was in September, at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, and not in December, as the memory thereof is now celebrated." Calculations and citations follow in support of this contention.

The interpretation, however, is inadmissible. The instinct of the Church has not recognised it. The Scripture has not authorized it, as it has done in the case of Passover and Pentecost by careful notations of time and sequence. Neither is there any real correspondence of *idea*. If the Feast had been ordained in remembrance of the Holy Tabernacle being reared and occupied by the Divine Presence, the resemblance would have held; but that event occurred at another time of the year, and is nowhere mentioned in connection with the Festival, which is expressly stated to be a memorial of the tabernacle life of the people themselves: "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days . . . that your generations may know that I

made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. xxiii. 42). But the decisive objection is that the Feasts are a connected scheme; and this interpretation dislocates it, by reversal of their relative positions. The Feast of Tabernacles is the last of the series, the end of the harvests, always spoken of in the Law as the concluding solemnity; always regarded by the Jews as, in the words of Philo, "the last of the year, and a conclusion specially fixed and holy."¹ It is inconceivable that the *close* of the typical celebrations should be meant to correspond with the *commencement* of the historical fulfilments, and that the relation of the types to one another should be precisely the reverse of those of the antetypes.

Certainly it is a just argument that this Feast, like the others, must have its corresponding celebration in virtue of accomplished facts; but the celebration is not yet held, because the facts are not yet accomplished. We (to use the words of our Lord) "go not up yet unto *this* Feast." Typically it describes a time which is still before us, whether we regard it in its agricultural or its historic sense.

These senses are combined in the scheme of Festivals; and the combination of them throws out their typical significance more distinctly. These are not two sets of unconnected ideas, accidentally conjoined by positive ordinance, but two sides of one idea—that of covenant relation to God, as Lord of the Land, and as Author of the national existence; each Feast marking an instalment of the material supply, and also a step in the historic progress.

Taking these two senses separately, they lead concurrently to the interpretation which we seek.

To the Passover was united the "*Feast of First-fruits*," in the month of Abib (green-ears), when the earliest use of the fruits of the earth was sanctified. "Ye shall bring the sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest to the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you . . . ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor fresh ears, till ye have brought the oblation of your God" (Lev. xxiii. 10, 14). The handful (*δράγμα*) of just ripened barley waved before the Lord, as the first produce and pledge of the coming crops, gave in later times the name by which the Feast was commonly known.²

Seven weeks were numbered, when larger labours were

¹ τελευταία γὰρ ἐστὶ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ, καὶ συμπέρασμα σταθερώτερον καὶ ἀγιώτερον.
—"De Septenario et Festis Diebus," ix.

² ἑορτὴ—ἥτις ἀπὸ τοῦ συμβεβηκότος ὀνομάζεται Δράγμα.—"De Septenario," etc.

needed, and a more perfect harvest was ready. "The Feast of Weeks" was also "*The Feast of Harvest*," *i.e.*, of the wheat harvest, which in its turn was sanctified by the offering of its first-fruits, but marked by a significant difference. Before, it was a handful of ears in the earliest stage in which they could be used; now it was wheat in its final state of preparation, "two wave loaves of two tenth parts, of an ephah, baken with leaven" (Lev. xxiii. 17).

Lastly, at the autumnal equinox came the "*Feast of Ingathering*," which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field" (Ex. xxiii. 16). "Thou shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, after thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine. Because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all the works of thy hands, therefore thou shall surely rejoice." (Deut. xvi. 13-16). This then is the high festival of completed labours, and of the various harvests gathered and secured. Yet no representative part of the produce of the earth was then brought into the Holy place to be waved before the Lord. No first-fruits could be offered now. It was not a consecration of that which was begun, but a thanksgiving for that which was completed.

Thus we pass through three stages of advance, two tied to each other by calculated weeks, and marked by the character of commencement; one more remote, expressive of completion. The typology is consistent, for such is the story of the Church, constituted at two moments of commencement, waiting for the appointed season of completion. If the Sheaf of the Passover typified the risen Lord, "Christ the first-fruits;" if the leavened loaves of Pentecost typified the maturer state of the Church, when instinct with the Spirit, and when its harvest began; then, by clear consequence, the gathered stores and fuller gladness of the last Feast must typify the time, when the promise of the spiritual first-fruits shall have been realized, by the accomplishing the number of the elect, when labours shall be ended, and their results secured, when the field shall be empty and the garners full.

In its higher character of an historic commemoration the Feast demands a like interpretation, and prophecies to the same effect. It is the last in the series which marked the salient points and recalled the decisive moments in the history of the Old Covenant.

The Passover celebrated the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, when the oppressing power was struck to the heart, and the chosen nation started into life, as the redeemed people of God.

Pentecost followed after a week of weeks. Thus attached to the preceding Feast, and, unlike the other two, consisting but

of a single day, it seems to indicate the perfecting of what went before. It does in fact synchronize with the event which completed the redemption from bondage by admission to the service of God. It fell, as careful calculation shows, and as has been noticed by the earliest commentators, on the day on which the Law was given from Mount Sinai. Eminent Rabbinical authorities assert, that it had that reference in the mind of the people, as the Feast of the Giving of the Law. But in the silence of Scripture, Philo, and Josephus, we can only cite the fact, that Passover and Pentecost coincided, as to time, with the departure from Egypt and the covenant at Sinai.

By these two events the nation was constituted. It wanted nothing but its home. The entrance on the promised land and "purchased possession" was the remaining step in completing the Divine intention, placing the chosen people in possession of their liberty, their law, and their land. Of this last great change the Feast of the seventh month was the memorial.

It may be said, Why? Was it not a memorial of the very contrary—of the unsettled life—the transition state? It was ordained "that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. xxiii. 43). Yes, it was a memorial of that *whole pilgrim* life, though it has been attempted to exclude this larger reference. Dean Stanley has observed on the name *Succoth*: "Always habitations of man or beast, made of leafy boughs. The Feast of Tabernacles, so called, was celebrated in such huts, and is always designated by this word, thus showing that *it did not commemorate the tents in the wilderness*, but probably the booths of the first start" ("Sinai," etc., Appendix, 515). But those booths could have no interest, except as the commencement of the life which followed. The English name "Tabernacles" (maintained in R.V., which places "Booths" in the margin) is derived from the LXX., which adopts the word *σκηνή—ἐορτή τῶν σκηνῶν*. And Philo says plainly it was "a remembrance of the long journeying of their forefathers in the deep wilderness, where, as they moved from one station to another, they dwelt in tents for many a year" ("De Sept.," ix.). These authorities (and perhaps they knew best) evidently thought that in keeping this Feast themselves, *they did therein commemorate the tents in the wilderness*.

But why celebrate this remembrance? The mere fact of having lived in tents is no reason for a perpetual ordinance of joy. But when this was recorded by the people in their land, their cities, and their homes, they had abundant cause for gladness, in the contrast between the pilgrim state and the end to which it had conducted them. Their joy was that **having** once lived in tents, they had ceased to live in them;

that, having once wandered, they now rested; that "the church in the wilderness" was now a church at home.

In accordance with this view, the occasions when this Feast is specially mentioned are those which represent the ideas of settlement, possession, and rest.

Though not mentioned in the story, a celebration "in the days of Joshua the son of Nun" left a long-enduring remembrance. "Then the Lord had given Israel all the land which He swore to their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein" (Neh. viii. 17).

The reign of Solomon is the era of consummation, possession, and peace—"and Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree." More especially it was the time of building; and the last relic of the Tabernacle-life was obliterated by the passage of the Ark from under curtains into the solid structure of the Temple. That act took place "at the feast of the seventh month;" and the rites of dedication were immediately followed by the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Long afterwards the dispersed and ruined nation begins to reappear, under the energetic administration of one man, "by the good hand of his God upon him." The Temple is rebuilt; the walls are finished; order and security are established. "In the seventh month the children of Israel are in their cities;" and the Feast of Tabernacles is celebrated after long cessation, with special gladness and a zealous revival of its most characteristic ceremonies (Neh. viii. 14-17).

One more remarkable reference occurs, not in history, but in prophecy. Zechariah, the prophet of the restoration, in his last chapter, predicts that the remnants of all nations, once enemies to Israel, "shall come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (xiv. 16-19). Through the visionary twilight we have discerned the last conflicts and their issue. Then comes the time when the Lord shall be King over all the earth; "one Lord and His name one:" and "the land shall be lifted up and inhabited in His place," and "men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited." Then comes the Feast on which the nations must henceforth wait. The reason why this, and no other, here represents the final joy and worship of the City of God, is found in the significance which it had to the prophet and his countrymen, as being the celebration of possession and rest, of wanderings ended, conflicts terminated, and promises fulfilled.

Other points may be noticed, telling the same result.

The moon, which at the full shone on the rejoicing nation,

had at its first appearance been greeted as the great new moon, and the silver trumpets had proclaimed a new civil year begun. These divine arrangements tally with things in a greater cycle of time. The sacred year represents the history of the Kingdom of God. The event which is called the "Coming of the Kingdom" falls far on in that history. It is the event of the seventh month. Yet at its arrival a new dispensation of external circumstances, a new age, a new world will have begun. The Scriptures, announcing that great transition, recall to our thoughts that ancient ordinance of the Feast of Trumpets, which marked the commencement of the month, which was the seventh and yet the first. "The trumpets shall sound, and the dead shall be raised" (Cor. xv. 52). "He shall send His angels with the great sound of a trumpet" (Matt. xxiv. 31). "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven . . . with the trump of God." "The seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev. xi. 15). These are the heavenly echoes of the trumpets, which preceded and introduced the Feast of Tabernacles.

Lastly, this was in an especial sense the Feast of Gladness. It was specially marked by more particular directions to "rejoice." Its peculiar symbols, the "boughs of goodly trees, and the branches of palm trees," have been ever the natural ornaments of days of joy and triumph, and in this case they bore a greater significance, where the memorials of life in a desert were woven from the groves and bowers of a rich and cultured land. Fresh tokens of joy, fresh reminiscences and associations were added in later times. The ceremony of drawing water, the antiphonal chanting, the expressive ritual, the animated scenes, have been often described, and are now familiar.

It was at the consummation of them "on the last day, the great day of the Feast, that Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John vii. 37-39). Immediately after the water-pouring, the chanting of the great Hallel, the responsive Hosannas, the waving of the Lulabh towards the altar, "*then*,"¹ when silence had fallen on the people, there rose, so loud as to be heard throughout the Temple, the voice of Jesus. He interrupted not the services, for they had for the moment ceased; He interpreted, and He fulfilled them."

But in their final significance He has yet to fulfil them. He knew what that Feast prophesied, and that the time was not

¹ Edersheim's "Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," vol. ii., p. 160.

yet. Surely there was a deeper meaning than the purpose of a few days' delay in that answer to His brethren—"I go not up yet unto *this* Feast, for My time has not yet been fulfilled."

Professor Westcott's note may be cited as leading up to the truth :

The sense may be, "I go not up with the great train of worshippers." Nor, indeed, did Christ go to the Feast as one who kept it. He appeared during the Feast, but then as a prophet suddenly in the temple. Perhaps, however, it is better to give a fuller force to the "going up," and to suppose that the thought of the next paschal journey when "the time was fulfilled" already shapes the words. The true reading "not yet," and also the exact phrase "*this* feast," give force to the interpretation. The Feast of Tabernacles was a festival of peculiar joy for work accomplished. At such a Feast Christ had now no place.

But He will celebrate it some day, and His people with Him. As truly as He fulfilled the *Passover* by Passion and Resurrection ; as truly as He answered *Pentecost* by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost ; so certainly will He come again to celebrate the ingathering of the spiritual harvest, and to hold the true *Feast of Tabernacles*. This is the cheering prospect set before us, who are still "in the earthly house of this tabernacle," who are still journeying in the wilderness, with our souls often "much discouraged because of the way, and who are not yet come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord our God giveth us." Not yet; but the distance is not far ; the time is not long. Let the pilgrims go forward with hopeful heart and expectant prayer, each for himself, and for his companions in the way.

Remember me with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people :
O visit me with Thy salvation ;
That I may see the prosperity of Thy chosen,
That I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation,
That I may glory with Thine inheritance.

(Ps. cvi. 4.)

O sweet and blessed country, the home of God's elect !
O sweet and blessed country, that eager hearts expect !
Jesus, in mercy bring us to that dear land of rest :
Who art, with God the Father, and Spirit ever bless'd. Amen.

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ART. II.—NEW TESTAMENT SAINTS NOT COMMEMORATED.

INTRODUCTORY.

UNDER the above title it is proposed to publish in **THE CHURCHMAN** a series of short papers, on some of the less prominent characters in the Apostolic Church. In the exercise of a sound discretion the Reformers pruned the Calendar with